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535 Deacon gives a fuller account of a performance of *teur* that he witnessed at Lambumbu,[1] which contains many of the same elements as the Small Islands version. He also describes the performance of a dance called by this name during the rites for the erection of a new gong-orchestra in Lagalag,[2] by which it would appear that in this neighbourhood all circular dances, whatever their probable variation in detail, are known by this name.

Another short but vivid impression, this time from Matanavat on the north coast, evidently referring to the same dance, has been recorded by Harrisson, whom it equally impressed.[3]

NA-LENG: FIGURE-DANCES AND MUMMING PLAYS

536 535 On an entirely different plane from any of the processional or circular dances described above are the figure-dances called *na-leng*.

While the former stir the deepest emotions, and for this very reason the average European, though vaguely aware of the tremendous forces that are at work in them, and moved beyond words by the intense, almost ecstatic feelings they arouse, cannot hope ever really to understand them, the figure-dances express a much more conscious side of the natives' creative power, and are thus more easy for the white man to appreciate in their full formal beauty. They are, in fact, the supreme expression of the natives' conscious artistic sense, which is of a very high order.

They represent in miniature all those things which the Greeks classed under the heading of Drama. For the word *na-leng* includes:

(*a*) Mumming Plays of two kinds, namely
  (i) Tragedies dealing with mythological subjects;
  (ii) Comedies which are skits on everyday life.

(*b*) Formal Figure-Dances, consisting of a chorus acting in conjunction with players of individual rôles.

The main difference between these and the classical drama lies in the fact that, apart from the intermittent accompaniment of the gongs, the dramatic performances are carried through in dumb show, the imitative powers of the natives, in which they are past masters, taking the place of words.

536 534 535 Mumming plays and the figure-dances are both called *na-leng*, and both are distinguished from all other features of native culture by the fact that the actors and dancers wear ankle-rattles made of the seed-cases

[1] Deacon, 4, p. 363.
[2] Ibid., 4, pp. 513 ff., including a plan of the dancing-ground and the position of the dancers on p. 515.
[3] Harrisson, 2, p. 31.

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of the *pangium edule* strung together on bands of soft plaited string. The note of these is softer than that of the Morris bells of England, since the comparative shrillness of the metal is absent, and when, as sometimes happens, as many as a hundred feet strike the ground together, the sound is at once voluminous and sweet.

The performances usually occur at dawn on the day of an important rite after the close of the preceding all-night dance. The occasions of which I have record on Vao are the morning of the day on which a new set of gongs is put up, and the morning of the Thirtieth Day after the main sacrifice both of Low and High Maki.[1]

They are probably performed on other occasions as well, for each *na-leng* has a special name, and a women's dance called *rokaik*,[2] connected with the killing of home-bred circle-tuskers and performed on the day of the chief sacrifice at High Maki, was said to be the same as the Atchin *na-leng wishewin*, or women's "*na-leng*."

Godefroy also records that "during the interminable Maki rites they perform a dance which takes them to *bakeran*," which means the sky, or "heaven" as he terms it.[3] This may be another *na-leng*, or may refer to one of the major Maki dances such as *Taure*.

On each occasion proceedings open with the performance of a series of mumming plays. These are performed in rotation by the members of the visiting villages, both from Vao and from the mainland and other Small Islands, who have already been taking part in the all-night dance. These may be either tragedies, that is to say plays based on mythological subjects though treated as a rule in a burlesque way, or else pantomimes representing everyday matters such as fishing or feeding fowls, or skits on recent events. The mythological origin of these mumming plays is shown by the fact that, in addition to the wearing of ankle-rattles, each actor either wears a mask (sure sign that he is a ghost), or else has his face covered by a veil consisting of strips of the white inner bark of certain trees tied on to a bamboo frame that rests on the head, on to the top of which is fastened a modelled or carved image of the man, fish, bird, or even inanimate object such as a boat, that he may for the time being represent. Thus clothed and disguised, the actors play their parts, always observing one rule, that they never remain still, but when supposed to be standing they must nevertheless dance, and when moving from one place to another must never walk or run, but must proceed with swift shuffling steps that cause their ankle-rattles to maintain a ceaseless musical clatter.

After the mumming plays are over, it is the turn of the home-people to perform a figure-dance. In this the main body of dancers is formed by the Maki-men themselves. They form, however, only the chorus. The parts of the individual star-dancers are taken by men of the introducing "line," the Maki-men's "fathers" or "sons."

[1] See p. 402. [2] See Song 3, p. 385. [3] See p. 214.

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Series of dances on Atchin represents gradual initiation of Maki-men into the mysteries.

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I did not myself see any of these performances on Vao, nor get any detailed accounts of them there, though I obtained some wooden images of fowls that had been worn on the head over their veils by the actors in one of the burlesque secular comedies that had been recently performed at the time of my visit.[1] I did, however, see some of the figure-dances on Atchin, and obtained also a general account of them as they occur in the Maki on that island, from which it appeared that, being performed at intervals of several years throughout the rite, they form a sequence illustrating the gradual initiation of the Maki-men into the mysteries of the rite.[2]

One of the characteristics of all these dances is that the Maki-men who constitute the main body of dancers and also the chorus are invariably formed into a square, ideally consisting of 100 men ranged in 10 lines of 10 men each. If, as often happens, there are not enough men the number may be reduced, as in cases I myself witnessed, in which the square consisted on one occasion of 49 men, formed of 7 lines of 7 men each, and on another of 5 lines of 5 men each, making a total of 25. The leader beats time on a portable bamboo slit gong. In the first figure-dance of the sequence the Maki-men go through a series of evolutions in which they represent small birds, symbolic of their as yet unfledged condition. There is a preparatory encircling movement, in which the whole body of dancers, one line following the other, break their square formation and form themselves into a spiral, finally re-forming into a square again at the other end of the ground. This is followed by a second preparatory movement, in which they again break their square and dance in single file in serpentine course from side to side of the ground with gestures representing swimming, as if they were crossing a sea-channel. After this they again form into a square, and the most spectacular phase of the dance begins. This again consists of two movements, in the first of which two men of the introducing "line" appear from outside the dancing-ground equipped with bows and arrows. These are called "bowmen," and they enact a complicated series of movements round and about the square representing a mock battle. Finally comes the most impressive scene of all. The bowmen retire, and in place of them comes a single dancer, also belonging to the introducing "line," with his body painted to represent the hawk. With arms outstretched as wings he dances in and around the square, threading his way backwards and forwards between the serried ranks of the Maki-men who form it. He then retires, making way for a yet more resplendent dancer, also be-

[1] See Layard, 1, Nos. 210, 211.

[2] The mumming plays show a similar tendency, but as the mythology referred to is peculiar to Atchin I will reserve publication of it for a future volume on that island.

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longing to the introducing "line," and likewise painted to represent a hawk, and called "the hawk pouncing on its prey." This "hawk" again dances round and in and out among ranks of Maki-men, at first in a peaceful way as did the first. At a given moment, however, he adopts a threatening attitude. His body sways from side to side, his "wings" raised first one side and then the other, till, finally, he dances a short distance away from the square, and then, turning round, swoops down upon the mass of Maki-men representing small birds who cower and shuffle, breaking formation to gather in a frightened formless mass around the feet of the "hawk" who, with outstretched arms, stands in their midst surveying the carnage.

So ends the first dance of the series. This is followed after an interval of years by another, in which women take part but of which I did not obtain details. This is again followed, when the stone-platform is being roofed in preparation for High Maki, by another in which boys dress up as women and the whole dance symbolises sexual connexion. There is another on the actual day of sacrifice, in which women again take part, which is said to correspond to the Vao *rokaik*. On the Thirtieth Day after the sacrifice the first dance described is repeated, and on the Hundredth Day there is yet another in which the sacrificers' wives' brothers take part.

The first dance described is also repeated on the Thirtieth Day after initiation, when the candidates issue from their seclusion. I myself witnessed it on one such occasion, and a detailed account of this performance, with photographs and technical terms, will be given in a later volume on Initiation in Atchin.

Meaning of the Dances.

Similar dances are performed in all the other Small Islands, and there is no doubt that those performed on Vao follow approximately the same lines. There is no space in this volume to go fully into the question of what these dances mean. Some indication, however, can be gathered from a comparative study of other forms of the same dance as it is performed in other parts of Malekula. The most illuminating of these is the account given by Deacon of the performance in the Seniang district of South-West Bay, where what in the Small Islands is spread out in a series of dances with intervals of years between them is there confined within the scope of a single dramatic performance. Though Deacon was himself unable to suggest what this dance meant, a detailed examination in the light of the Small Islands performances and of other aspects of Malekulan culture makes it clear that this dance represents at one and the same time (*a*) a sacred marriage, (*b*) an initiation rite, and (*c*) the Journey of the Dead. Students of comparative religion will not be surprised at this combination, which is a common one found throughout the religions of the Ancient East. The most important element in it is the Journey of

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the Dead, of which one feature has already been met with in my brief summary of the Atchin *na-leng*, namely the swimming movement representing the crossing of the channel into the land of the dead.

Sand-tracings and the Journey of the Dead.

The other, and much more important element from the point of view of comparative culture, is to be found in the pattern of the final movement of the dance, in which the Maki-men form a solid body arranged in rows and members of the introducing "line" thread their way through them. Members of the introducing "line" occupy in the Maki the position of those already fully initiated, and comparison with the version of the Journey of the Dead as recorded by Deacon from Seniang shows that this progression of initiates between the ranks formed by the Maki-men corresponds with the path followed by the dead man through a maze-like design drawn in the sand by the Guardian Ghost, a figure that the dead man must know how to complete before entering into the land of the dead through the cave by which she sits. If he does not know how to do this, the Guardian Ghost devours him. I have shown elsewhere how this maze-design represents the labyrinthine entrance to the tomb in the civilisations of the Ancient East, of which the existing Malekulan belief is a faint echo. Sand-tracings and figure-dances of *na-leng* type are thus both seen to be derived from labyrinths constructed to trap the ignorant and to prevent access to the land of the dead to all except those who, through the performance of due ritual and the resulting acquirement of the necessary knowledge, have earned the right to enter.[1] There is no space here to go into the details of this matter. A short summary, together with some of the sand-tracings, is given in Chapter XXV, and those interested in following it up further can refer to my article on *Maze-Dances and the Ritual of the Labyrinth in Malekula*.[2]

This article points out the connexion of labyrinths with initiation in many parts of the world that have been influenced by the same megalithic civilisations that have given rise to the Maki in Malekula. One of the chief conclusions drawn in it is the dual nature of the megalithic stream that touched these shores, representing in all probability two separate migrations, having their origins in the ancient centres of civilisation. Of these the first was predominately matrilineal, bringing with it the belief in the home of the dead in a cave, together with the dolmen as chief sacrificial monument. The later was, on the other hand, predominately patrilineal and brought with it the belief in the home of the dead in a volcano, together with the stone-platform and the monolith. These two layers of culture have already been met with frequently throughout these

[1] Compare Mota *lenga*, used as a noun for "a woman's dance" and as a verb "to be indistinct, bewildering" (Codrington, 2).

[2] Layard, 6.

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pages. The fresh information derived from a brief comparative study of the *na-leng* in the Northern New Hebrides is that it is to the earlier of these, namely that primarily connected with the cave and the dolmen, that this type of dance and the accompanying mumming plays belong. It is thus not surprising to find that in the Small Islands these dances are especially associated with the matrilineal island of Oba, in which the later form of graded society represented by the Malekulan Maki is absent. What is more significant still is the situation in South Raga. Here there is a class system of kinship based on matrilineal moieties on to which patrilineal descent groups have later been imposed. While in the regulation of kinship both lines of descent are given equal weight, in overt social organisation patrilineal descent predominates to the extent that residence is patrilocal, as it is in Vao. In the same way, there are in South Raga two elements in the public graded society, firstly the more overtly prominent and newer form of rite embodied in the Warsangul society, which corresponds to the Maki in Malekula, and secondly the less overt but more fundamentally important rite of Lo-sal, which will be referred to later [1] and which is based on the fulfilment of obligations due to the maternal ancestors. What is important to note here is that, of these two elements in South Raga, the figure-dance called *leng* (said to be danced in honour of tusked boars and which corresponds to the Small Islands *na-leng*) belongs, like *tairen* (Vao *taur*), to the older matrilineal rite in which the main sacrificial monument is the dolmen.

Examples from neighbouring districts. Prominence of the sex element.

Beyond mentioning their existence, Père Tattevin does not give any description of these dances in South Raga, and, apart from my own, the only descriptions I know are those given by Deacon from Seniang [2] and by Harrisson from Matanavat [3] on the north coast of Malekula and from the Big Nambas.[4] All these emphasise the sex element. It is said, both in Seniang and in Matanavat, that the beauty of the dances is so great and the grace of the dancers so alluring that women are tempted to leave their husbands for love of the youths who take part. This same element is also seen in the fact that the only such dance recorded from among the Big Nambas is one danced in honour of a chief's daughter at her marriage.

[1] See p. 721.

[2] Deacon, 4, pp. 469 ff. He mentions also (pp. 410-14) a Nalawan grade and dance called *Lelengoa'al*, but the dance in this case appears to be a circular one round the gongs.

[3] Harrisson, 2, pp. 35-7. Of the dances in this district he says: "The chorus have thirty days' rigorous training. They are not allowed out of a small enclosure in which there is a special house; they are not allowed to see the sea or women; they may only eat certain oven-cooked foods." The connexion between the sea and women is interesting on account of a similar association in the dreams of modern Europeans and in legendary figures such as mermaids.

[4] Harrisson, 2, pp. 411, 413-14; also 1, pp. 113, 118-19.

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Connexion between na-leng and artificial elongation of the head.

One further matter of comparative interest is worth mentioning also, namely that the type of beauty chiefly associated with those dances in Seniang is intimately connected with the practice of artificially elongating the head. This type of head-deformation, or head-beautifying as the natives see it, is restricted to the south and south-west of Malekula, and in Seniang only such youths as have finely elongated heads are allowed to take part.

Na-leng performances very flexible, both in form and in manner in which they are used.

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I began this section on the *na-leng* by pointing out that the dances and plays called by this name represent what is perhaps the most conscious element in the whole complex of Malekulan culture. As such, they are also the most flexible, and in the case of burlesques of the secular variety new ones are constantly being invented. Indeed, it is of the essence of the secular plays that they *should* be new, or if, as often happens, a successful play is repeated, that new features should be added. The dances, being much more highly organised and involving a greater number of participants, have not yet emancipated themselves from the traditional initiation pattern to the same extent, but even they possess a much greater elasticity of form than the processional or circular dances, which change much more slowly. For the same reason, they are more movable also in a topographical sense, parties of performers vying with one another in showing off their new conceits, and so seizing every opportunity that offers to perform in other villages. Thus, while the organisation of the *na-leng* is still on a kinship basis, the ritual occasions on which they are performed are apt to be taken in a particularly light-hearted way. On the other hand, when the community is depressed they are often the first ritual element to be dropped out, the excuse of being "too lazy" to perform being one which is admitted in the case of a *na-leng*, but unthinkable in the case of the more fundamental aspects of the rite.

Dances of na-leng type from New Ireland.

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It is therefore interesting to note that, in the only other part of the Western Pacific from which dances of *na-leng* type have been recorded, namely the Tanga group of islands off the east coast of New Ireland, these dances form part of a secret society initiation rite that has recently been introduced from the neighbouring mainland.[1] It is also perhaps not without significance that New Ireland, whence this society came, is not far from Arawi (Arue) on the coast of New Britain, which is the nearest point to Malekula where artificial elongation of the head is practised,

[1] Bell, pp. 311 ff.

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and whence also Speiser derives the New Hebridean practice of artificially elongating the tusks of boars.[1]

Sociologically it is interesting to note that in Tanga, while residence is patrilocal, descent and inheritance are matrilineal, which supports the conclusion already arrived at, that dances of *na-leng* type belong to a matrilineal culture ante-dating, in Malekula, the introduction of patrilocal descent and residence and the existing form of Maki.

Canoe na-leng from Matanavat resembles similar dance recorded by Captain Cook from Tonga in 1776.

In concluding this section, I cannot refrain from comparing a brief account of a *na-leng* recently danced in Matanavat with one seen by Captain Cook in Tonga in the year 1776. Of Matanavat Harrisson writes:

"A beautiful dance symbolises the coming of a first canoe, the chorus moving forward with feathered and painted paddles to the nut-rattled rhythm from the bangles tied on their ankles, all the upper body moving in muscle as their feet strike forward like waves over the earth, while at the back the two steersmen work their big paddles as if in a storm." [2]

Captain Cook's account from Tonga runs:

"The chief entertained us, in his turn, with an exhibition, which, as was acknowledged by us all, was performed with a dexterity and exactness far surpassing the specimen we had given of our military manœuvres. It was a kind of dance, so entirely different from anything I had ever seen, that I fear I can give no description that will convey any tolerable idea of it to my readers. It was performed by men; and one hundred and five persons bore their parts in it. Each of them had in his hand an instrument neatly made, shaped somewhat like a paddle, of two feet and a half in length, with a small handle and a thin blade, so that they were very light. With these instruments they made many and various flourishes, each of which was accompanied with a different movement. At first the performers ranged themselves in three lines, and, by various evolutions, each man changed his station in such a manner that those who had been in the rear came into the front. Nor did they remain long in the same position. At one time they extended themselves in one line, they then formed into a semicircle, and lastly into two square columns. While this last movement was executing, one of them advanced and performed an antic dance before me, with which the whole ended.

"The musical instruments consisted of two drums, or rather two

[1] See p. 267.

[2] Harrisson, 2, p. 35. In this *na-leng* the dancers have apparently combined the mythological motive of crossing the water, seen in the Atchin dance, with a historical drama.

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hollow logs of wood, from which some varied notes were produced by beating on them with two sticks. It did not, however, appear to me that the dancers were much assisted by these sounds, but by a chorus of vocal music, in which all the performers joined at the same time. Their song was not destitute of pleasing melody, and all their corresponding motions were executed with so much skill, that the numerous body of dancers seemed to act as if they were one great machine. It was the opinion of every one of us that such a performance would have met with universal applause on an European theatre, and it so far exceeded any attempt we had made to entertain them, that they seemed to pique themselves on the superiority they had over us." [1]

Tongan and Malekulan settings compared.

This account is interesting for its close similarity with the Malekulan performances. The hundred and five performers undoubtedly represent a chorus of one hundred, which, it will be remembered, is the ideal number in the Small Islands, with five other dancers taking individual rôles. The chorus forms into squares, and the same instrument accompanies the dance as that used in the Small Islands *na-leng*, namely the small horizontal slit gong. The manner in which the Tongan dance was performed, as a theatrical performance pure and simple, also agrees with the flexible nature of the *na-leng* on Malekula.

Polynesian elements in the New Hebrides probably due to passage of Polynesians on their migration eastward.

The comparison just drawn raises anew the question of the nature of Polynesian influence in the New Hebrides. It is sometimes thought that such traces as are found are due to chance voyages back westward from Polynesia in comparatively recent times. Such movements have undoubtedly taken place, though whether by design or owing to contrary winds is not known. Both may have contributed. But the fundamental connexion of the *na-leng*, not with the newer, but with the older forms of public graded society ritual in Malekula, point rather to the fact that some elements of Polynesian culture at least reached Polynesia by way of the New Hebrides.

If this is the case, it reinforces the impression gained from the evidence of the extensive stone constructions in such places as Gaua [2] and Malo that there existed in these islands at one time a culture considerably more highly developed than any of those found there now, and that this had much in common with certain aspects of Polynesian culture as it existed when the white men first found it.

[1] Cook, pp. 263-6.

[2] See Codrington, 3, Frontispiece, and Harrisson, 2, Plate facing p. 322, which figures the only stone statue carved in the round that has been recorded in the islands.

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liminary grades in order to enhance the dignity of those few who had reached the highest rank. In Atchin, on the other hand, owing to the communal nature of the rite and the mutual help afforded by every member of the village community to every other member, a contrary process was at work, the lower grades being already in process of elimination before the arrival of the white man. With the acquisition of the new wealth this process became speeded up, with the result that by the time of my visit they had all disappeared, so that each and every man, youth, and male piccaninny on the island who was capable of sacrificing a pig belonged to the grade *Mal*, much to the chagrin of those in other communities who had taken a lifetime achieving it. Even the older men on Atchin felt somewhat abashed by the general levelling-up, and, in order to assert their own superiority, a new supernumerary grade had been invented, called *Mel-teg*, literally "The *Mal* who stays at home," referring to the vows of abstinence taken after the *Maki*. It is amusing and significant to note that, according to Mr. Harrisson, the young men have again asserted their equality and that now most men on Atchin possess the title *Mel-teg*, and apparently for the moment, in this respect at any rate, democracy has reasserted itself, for there is no record of any further supernumerary grade.

The younger generation of natives made use of the white man's coming not only in the direction of freeing themselves from the domination of the older men. With the acute dramatic sense which is the essence of their culture they had also made up to some extent for other deprivations which the white man had brought about by using both him and his inventions for the enhancement of their already rich ritual life. Pantomimic representations of various aspects of the white man's activities had been incorporated into the dramatic repertory of the *na-leng* plays and dances, muskets were used to heighten the effect of ritual combats during the sex-initiatory expedition to Omba, into the more serious initiation rites on Atchin, in which hoaxes are performed on the initiates, more than one white man's *tour de force* was incorporated, and many of the masks and images were made lurid by means of Reckett's blue.

It is however significant to note that, even in the case of such a wide departure from native tradition as the abandonment of the manufacture of their own long-distance canoes in favour of white men's whale-boats, the old consecration rites were still continued. At one such consecration rite at which I was present over sixty valuable tusked boars were sacrificed, and the supreme sacrifice was that of a bullock, obtained from a trader, for which all the complicated sacrificial ritual was performed; while in the pantomimic dances the skulls of a bullock and two goats were used as masks.

One final word as to the causes of depopulation. At the time of my visit the population was on the decline. Of physical causes the chief was, as has been seen, the introduction of the musket which turned comparatively harmless semi-ritual combats into lethal battles. Second to this, the introduction of diseases, mainly of dysentery, which wiped out whole families. As to the psychological causes put forward by Rivers and others but denied by Mr. Harrisson, all I am able to say quite definitely is that there was at that time a general belief among the older men and some of the young ones that the race was doomed. The old men remembered the day when native culture was the highest achievement of the human race as they conceived it. The appearance